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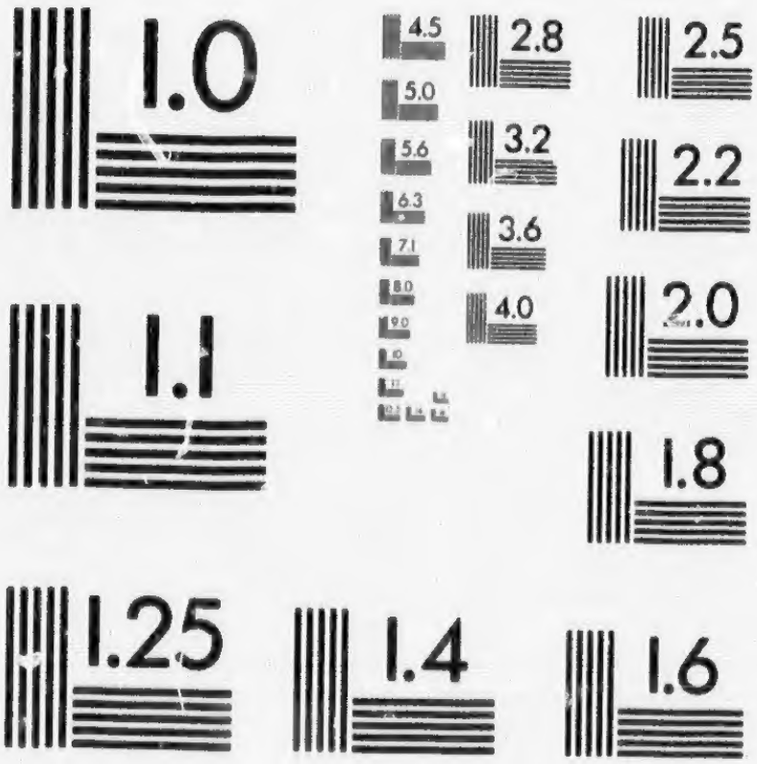

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THE MILLENNIUM:

To Mr. A. Park

A DISCOURSE,

from a friend

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

REFORMED PRESBYTERY OF NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA,

ON WEDNESDAY, 11th MAY, 1864,

BY

REV. J. R. LAWSON,

BARNESVILLE, N. B.

MARITIME CONFERENCE ARCHIVES

Published by the Request of Presbytery.

SAINT JOHN N. B.
PRINTED BY BARNES & COMPANY,
PRINCE WILLIAM STREET.
1864.

WORKS

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SERMON.

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless, pit, and a great chain in his hand.
"And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years;
"And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled."—REV. xx. 1, 2, 3.

THE book of Revelation is a prospective history of the Church of God, from the time of the Apostle John, until the final consummation of all things. "Write," said the faithful and true witness, to his servant in the Isle of Patmos, "the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." The Apostle, in holy vision, saw the future of the Church pass before him. He saw certain seals opened, certain vials poured out, and heard certain trumpets sounded—indicating certain great epochs in the history of the witnessing, suffering, yet ultimately triumphant Church of God. In the text, a very glorious scene is represented as bursting on the view of the inspired Apostle. Wrapt in prophetic vision, he sees an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand: he sees him laying hold on Satan, the deceiver of the nations, and casting him into the bottomless pit, and shutting him up, and setting a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more until a thousand years should be fulfilled. The evident import of this symbolic language is, that prior to the final consummation of all things, and immediately succeeding the downfall of Antichrist, and every anti-christian system, there will be a period of remarkable light and glory—a blessed period, during which the Church shall wear her beautiful garments, and appear fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners; a blessed period of one thousand years, during which the kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and truth and righteousness and peace shall spread over all nations.

Believing that we are rapidly approaching this glorious

millennial era, we have considered that it would be interesting, and, we trust, profitable to contemplate—

I. Some of the more prominent characteristic features of this good time coming.

II. Some of the indications which Divine Providence furnishes of its near approach.

III. Our present duty in relation to it.

I. Some of the more *prominent characteristics of the millennium.*

1st. It will be characterised by a *a very remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God.*

The Holy Spirit is the author of all pure and undefiled religion. Until He begins to move in the soul, all is darkness, confusion, and death. Without his efficacious energy exerted in the heart, Paul may plant, Apollos may water, but yet there will be no increase. Every genuine revival of religion in the Church is the work of the Spirit. He invariably begins the work; he selects, prepares, and calls into operation instrumentalities as seems good in his sight; and, whatever measure of success attends the employment of these instrumentalities, is the fruit of his gracious operation. That condition of things, which we designate the "*millennium,*" will be the most wonderful revival of religion which has ever marked the annals of the Church of God; and it will be the fruit of the most remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit that the Church has ever enjoyed. "And it shall come to pass in the last days," saith God, by the prophet Joel, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days, will I pour out my Spirit."—(Joel ii. 28, 29.) This promise, it is true, was partially fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. God then poured out His Spirit in a very remarkable manner, opening a door of utterance to the Apostles, and a door of entrance for the truths which they proclaimed in the name of the Holy Child Jesus; and such were the blessed effects flowing from that communication from on high, that Jewish pride and bigotry bowed at the name of Jesus. Multitudes of them that had aided in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory, looked to him whom they had pierced, and mourned for him. But it is to the millennial era that we are to look for the fullest and most glorious accomplishment of this promise. Then God will pour out

more abundantly than in any previous period, His Spirit, as a Spirit of grace and supplication; and then the "house of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem," rulers and ruled, all ranks and conditions of men, will "look to him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourneth for an only son, and be in bitterness for him as one is in bitterness for his first born."—(Zech. xii. 10.) Then the Gospel will be preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. The word of the Lord shall go forth from Jerusalem, and with the power of the Highest accompanying it, will prove the rod of God's great power, and Zion's converts will be numerous and beautiful as the pearly drops of dew from the womb of the morning. (Ps. cx. 2, 3.)

In allusion to the abundance of divine influences which will characterise the latter day, God promises to "open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; to make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."—(Isaiah xli. 18.) In allusion to the blessed effects of this gracious and extensive outpouring, it is promised that Zion's children "shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."—(Isaiah xliv. 4, 5.) "When the Spirit shall be poured from on high, then the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be counted for a forest."—(Isaiah xxxii. 15.)

2d. The millennium will be characterised by a *very glorious condition of the Church of God.*

This glorious condition of the Church will be the fruit of the Spirit's promised influences. The Church has no glory, save and except what she receives from the Spirit. She may have numbers, wealth, gorgeous temples, and a pompous ceremonial, and yet she may have no glory whatever, in the estimation of Him who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. But when God pours down his Spirit upon his Church—upon her *ministers*, making them men of faith, of humility, of prayer, and of devotedness to God; upon her *members*, enlightening their understandings, renewing their wills, and purifying their hearts, inscribing upon them "holiness to the Lord;" when "He abundantly blesses her provision, and satisfies her poor with bread; when he clothes her priests with

health, and makes her saints to shout aloud for joy"—then the Church is *glorious indeed;* then she puts on her beautiful garments, and "the King greatly desires her beauty." And this, we are assured, will be the case in the latter day. The Psalmist, describing the glories of the Messiah's reign, says in the 72d Psalm, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth." "*In his days shall the righteous flourish;*" and the evangelical prophet Isaiah, with his eye upon the resplendent glories of the millennial Church, speaks of the glory of Lebanon coming unto her, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of God's sanctuary, and to make the place of his feet glorious.

Then the Church will be glorious in regard to her *numbers.*

It is melancholy to reflect, that after the expiration of upwards of eighteen hundred years, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God has made such comparatively little progress amongst the nations of the world. We sometimes talk about the wonderful circulation of the word of God, through the agency of the different Bible Societies. That circulation amounts, I believe, to somewhere about seventy two million copies. That appears a large number, and is really a large number; but when we compare it with the population of our globe, who must have Bibles, or portions of them, or else perish eternally—*will it appear large?* The truth is, that notwithstanding all the efforts of all the Bible Societies in the new and old world, not more than one in every fifteen of the world's fallen and perishing population has as yet received the revelation of heaven's mercy. And then, when we consider that of those seventy two million copies, twenty-six million have been circulated in Britain and its dependencies; twenty-five million on the Continent of Europe; and sixteen million in America, we will see that only five million copies of the word of life have been put in circulation amongst the darkened millions in Africa and Asia. And what are they among so many? It is melancholy to reflect, that even in this nineteenth century, with all its light, and civilization, and improvement, Christ should have the few, and Satan the many. But so it is. And if we subtract from the population of our globe the six hundred million or eight hundred million of heathens; if we subtract from the remainder the darkened and fanatical millions that own subjection to the false prophet Mahomet; if we deduct from the remainder

the seven million of unbelieving Jews, who reject the only hope of Israel; if we deduct from the balance the one hundred and eighty million followers of the "Man of sin, and son of perdition;" and then, if we subtract from the balance the vast multitude of those who in nominally Christian and Protestant Churches have only a *name to live*—who have only the *form of godliness*, will not an almost infinitesimally small number remain, who may in truth and sincerity say, "Now are we the sons of God."

But in the glorious millennial era, what a different picture will be presented! The Church, which has hitherto been as a barren woman, will be the joyful mother of children. Her sons shall come from far, and her daughters shall be nursed at her side.—(Isaiah lx. 4.) The promise is, that "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, *and all people shall flow unto it.*"—(Micah iv. 1.) "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth, upon the top of the mountains, the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth."—(Ps. lxxii. 16.) The promise is, that multitudes shall be born at once—whole nations in one day; and it will not be *one individual* sending to another individual; but it will be the *inhabitants of one city*, sending to the inhabitants of *another city*, saying, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts." Yea, many people, and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.—(Zech. viii. 21, 22.) The 72d Psalm, and the 60th chapter of Isaiah, by an assemblage of the most striking metaphors, depict the future glories of the Church, when she shall arise and shine, and the Gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising.

Again. The Church will be glorious in regard to her *light and knowledge.*

In allusion to this, it is promised, "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold as the light of seven days." Again it is promised, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as *the waters cover the sea.*" (Hab. ii. 14.) The waters cover the sea, not only universally, but also *deeply;* hence, we are accustomed to speak of the *depth of the sea.* The similitude seems intended to express not only the universality, but the *depth* of that spiritual knowledge which shall characterise the latter day.

And it may be, in allusion to this, that it is said, "The child shall die an hundred years old."—(Isaiah lxv. 20.) This may denote that in the millennial era, the child shall die as deeply versed in the mysteries of Divine truth, and with the graces of the Divine Spirit as fully matured, as the Christian in other times of an hundred years old.

Again. The Church shall be glorious in regard to her *unity*.

It is melancholy, that the visible Church of the Redeemer should, in the present day, be split up into so many divisions and sub-divisions, each eying the other, sometimes, with jealousy, prejudice, and animosity. It is true, that efforts are being put forth in various quarters, to abolish these denominational distinctions, and to consolidate into one body, denominations that have hitherto maintained a separate position. Many look upon this as one of the most favourable features of the present times, and a hopeful sign of the *good time coming*. It is very doubtful if we are warranted to look at the matter in that light. It is very questionable, if the cry for ecclesiastical union which we hear so frequently, is a hopeful sign of the times. We believe that some of those unions that have been consummated, and others that are in contemplation, have their origin in an undervaluing of certain portions of God's precious truth. Founded, as they are, on the basis of a compromise, or a mutual agreement to hold in abeyance certain articles of the creed for which the denominations previously contended, they cannot have the sanction of Him who says, "Buy the truth, and *sell it not*." "Whereunto ye have already attained, walk by the same rule, mind the same things." Such unions are like a wall built up with untempered mortar, they must sooner or later fall, and result in greater confusion. Very sound and judicious are the remarks of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon on this subject. "All attempts to create unity, apart from truth, must fall to the ground. Unity of action for God's glory, and so on, we can ever have, despite our minor differences, and, I trust, we ever shall have it; but to attempt to form a Church on any other basis than that of definite fixed principles, must be an attempt to build a house upon the sand—and it must come down. First purity, and then unity; first truth, and then oneness. I would not sell a principle of God's word, for all the brotherly love under heaven; because I hold that brotherly love, which will not let me keep my conscience clear, is not such brotherly love

as Christ inculcated in the Holy Scriptures. Let there be firmness to truth, to every thing that you have received of the Lord. Let us seek no union, by throwing aside these truths which God has clearly revealed to us."

Before that there can be a legitimate incorporation of two or more bodies, there must be full agreement in all the Articles of their creed; and until the different denominations see eye to eye in things pertaining to the kingdom of God—until they are united in the same mind and judgment, it is every way better that they should have a separate organization, and a distinct Communion Table; at the same time cultivating and exemplifying mutual good feeling, weeping with each other when they weep, rejoicing with each other when they rejoice, co-operating with each other in works of faith and labours of love, as they may have opportunity, and looking forward with joyful hope to that glorious time when these divisions that now rend the body of Christ, shall for ever cease; when ecclesiastical distinctions shall cease, because differences of sentiment shall cease, and when the prayer of the Redeemer, regarding the unity of his people, shall be gloriously answered—"That they all may be one." And such a time will come. Persons sometimes assert that it is vain to expect full agreement in the Church; that it will never be realized. But God has said otherwise. He has said that the watchmen on Zion's walls shall lift up their voice, and with the voice together they shall sing, for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion. He has promised that Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim—(Isaiah xi. 13.) It is promised, that in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one. (Zech. xiv. 9.)

Again. The Church will be glorious in regard to her *liberality.*

It cannot be said that this is a feature of the Church in the present day. The duty of giving, as the *Lord hath prospered*, for the support of the Church at home, and her extension abroad, has not yet been practically recognized by any branch of the Christian Church. It is pleasing to reflect, that in many quarters the Church is beginning to wake up to a sense of her responsibility in this matter—and "systematic beneficence" is one of the great topics of the day. Still it cannot be questioned, that there is on the part of the Church in general, a withholding more than is meet from the treasury of the Lord. This state of matters

is, perhaps owing, in part, to the sinful backwardness of ministers of the Gospel in general, in speaking on the subject. There is a degree of odium connected with the introduction of pecuniary matters into the discourses of the pulpit, which seals oftentimes the lips of men, when they ought to speak out. Such backwardness is displeasing to God, and injurious to the Church. Let me ask, how is it possible for one to declare the whole counsel of God, without the introduction of pecuniary matters? Is not a large portion of the Bible occupied with such matters? Has not the Apostle Paul several chapters of his epistles occupied with the duty and privilege of giving? How then is it possible for a Preacher of the Gospel to lecture or preach on any of these chapters, without speaking about *money?* Then, how is it that the millennium is to be brought about? Will it be by a miracle? No; but by the blessing of God on human agencies. The employment of these agencies requires money. The Bible must be printed and circulated, missionaries must be trained, sent out, and supported. All this requires *money;* and from whence is the money to come? Will the Head of the Church rain it down as he did the manna, round about the camp of Israel? No; it must come from the pockets of those who profess to be not their own, but God's; and who are under an obligation to "honour the Lord with their substance, and with the first fruits of all their increase." And if the members of the Church of Christ would realize that *they are not their own*—that their possessions are *not their own;* that all that they are, and have, belongs to Him who loved them, and gave himself for them, the believing apprehension of this truth would touch their hearts—and soon touch their pockets; and the cause of the Redeemer would not languish for want of pecuniary support. Then the Church would have no need to go a begging at the world's door for means to carry on her operations. Then tea Soirees, and Bazaars, and Pic-nics, and Christmas trees, and such like tricks of carnal wisdom, to coax money out of the pockets of those who have no sympathy with the Church in her interests and objects, would be done away, because no longer necessary, and the Church would have abundance of means within herself to build her places of worship, support her ministers, and sustain her missions.

Such a recognition of obligation, and such Christian liberality, will characterise the millennial Church. Then Christians will feel more sensibly than ever they have felt

before, that they *are not their own;* they will say more cordially than ever they could say before, "I am the Lord's;" and in a spirit of true-hearted devotedness, they will "honour the Lord with their substance, and the first fruits of their increase;" and they will consecrate their gain to the Lord of the whole earth.

Again. The Church will be glorious in regard to her *holiness.*

In relation to this, there are very many precious promises. It is promised, that "On the bells of the horses there shall be HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD."—(Zech. xiv. 20.) That was the inscription on the breast-plate of the ancient high priest, when he went into the Most Holy Place on the great day of atonement. In the millennial period, it will be on the commonest things, even the bells of the horses. Then there will be an unprecedented exemplification of "religion in common life." Then religion will not be a thing for the Sabbath day merely, but a thing *for every day.* It will not be like a Sabbath day garment, which men put on in the morning of that day, and put off at its close; but men will wear it *every day,* and they will take it with them to the market, and the field, and the work-shop, and the counting-house, and the social circle; and whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, they will endeavour to do all to the glory of God.

Again. It is promised, "The pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar."—(Zech. xiv. 20.) This denotes that the commonest vessels in God's house will be as pure as those most sacred. The ministry will then be holy, and the people will be equally so. Rulers in God's house will have "*holiness to the Lord*" inscribed upon them; and the same degree of moral excellence will characterise the ruled. And this will be no more than the law of God's house prescribes. That law is, "The whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house."—(Ez. xliii. 12.) The divine prescription is not, that the altar of God's house merely, but that the whole limit of that house round about shall be most holy. So that there is not one code of morals for pastors, and another for their people; not one system of ethics for rulers in God's house, and another for the ruled. No. If pastors are to be holy, their people are under the same obligation; if they are to set a holy example before their people, the people are to set a holy example before *them:* for if the altar of God's house is to be most holy,

so is the whole limit thereof round about. And so it will be in the millennial period—for "The pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar."

Again. There is another blessed assurance, "And in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts."—(Zech. xiv. 21.) It is not promised that there will be no Canaanites then—aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise there will be; but there will be one place where they will not be found—the *house of the Lord of hosts*—the Church of the living God. The Church of the millennium will not be a mixture of tares and wheat, as the visible Church has been in ages past, and as she is now; for the assurance is, the Canaanite shall not be found in her pale. But how shall this promise be fulfilled? Will the Lord of hosts, who has the hearts of all men in his hand, cause such a terror to seize upon the ungodly, that they will not dare to seek membership in such a holy confederacy as the Church of the living God? Such may be the case. Or will the terms of admission into the pale of the millennial Church be so holy, that they will at once exclude those who would now be welcomed into many a professing Christian society? Such undoubtedly will be the case. But there will be one circumstance that will eminently serve to protect the Church from the intrusion of ungodly men—a circumstance that will protect the pulpit from the intrusion of ungodly ministers, and the Lord's Table from ungodly communicants; and that will be *the holiness of the Church's members.* Now, men of unrenewed and unsanctified hearts, can find their way into the Church, and can be even comfortable there. They meet with very little to repel them; very little in the conversation of ministers, ruling elders, or people, to repel them by its sanctity. But in the millennial Church it will be far different. Then, when "holiness to the Lord" shall be inscribed on the members of the Church, when the pots in the Lord's house shall be as the bowls before the altar; then the Canaanite, even if he *could, would* not find his way into the house of the Lord; he could not stand the dazzling brightness with which he would be surrounded; he could not bear to be brought into such close contact with holy men, holy women, and holy children—and therefore he will choose to stand aloof, and not come into close quarters with those, who by their holiness, will be not only fair as the morn, and clear as the sun; but also *to him,*

terrible as an army with banners. O! what a glorious condition of things that will be. Holiness in the cottage, holiness in the palace, holiness at the altar of God, the whole limit thereof round about *most holy.*

3d. The Millennium will be characterized by the *voluntary subjection of all national associations to the sceptre of Prince Messiah.*

It was the assurance of this that brightened the eye and gladdened the heart of the Apostle John, when he heard great voices in Heaven saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ (Rev. xi. 15). The 1260 years of Antichrist's reign have come to a termination—the witnesses that have prophesied during that dark period in sackcloth have been slain—their three and a half days of contempt and dishonour during which their dead bodies have been exposed in the streets of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, have terminated also; and now they have a glorious resurrection; the spirit of life enters into them; they ascend up to heaven; and now as the result of that resurrection of the witnesses, the revival of principles long despised, great voices are heard in heaven, proclaiming, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." Now, if Antichrist's dark reign has not yet terminated—if the angel has not yet proclaimed "Babylon is fallen"—if the two witnesses have not yet finished their testimony—if they have not yet been slain and raised again to life, and honour, and influence, then these great voices have not yet been heard; for it is consequent on the occurrence of these events that the Apostle, in prophetic vision, saw the triumph of the Redeemer's sceptre, and the universal subjection of national associations to Him as the Prince of the kings of the earth.

If we cast our eyes abroad over the nations of the earth, we will meet with indisputable evidence that this condition of things has not yet been realized—melancholy evidence, that the nations of the world have not, as national organizations, "kissed the Son," that they have not thoroughly adopted his word as their supreme rule of legislation, and that in the administration of their national affairs they have not such regard to his will and his glory as entitles them to be designated "Kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Passing over the neighbouring Republic, and the nations of continental Europe—let us look at Britain, the most

christianized of all the nations of the earth, where the great principles of civil and religious liberty are better understood and more fully exemplified than anywhere else, and the constitution of which is incomparably the best in Christendom—we have a right to ask the question, Has Britain yet come up to the Scripture idea of a Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ? Is the constitution of Britain a thoroughly christian constitution? Are the rulers of Britain christian rulers? and are the laws of Britain thoroughly christian laws? I think that when we consider the national support that is given to idolatry in India, and the national countenance that is given to Romish idolatry at home—when we consider that upwards of £200,000 sterling are annually given out of the national treasury for the support of Romish schools in Britain, and that £30,000 are annually granted to clothe, feed and educate 500 candidates for the priesthood, in connexion with a system that the Spirit of the Lord designates "Antichrist," and which He will destroy with the spirit of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming—when we consider the contempt that is cast upon the law of Christ in the setting up of the nation's rulers: that law says, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God:" it ordains that those called to rule must be able men, men of truth, fearing God and hating covetousness; but the constitution of Britain virtually and practically says *No* to all this: it practically says, that whilst *social* qualifications are requisite, and some measure of *intellectual* qualifications, that *moral* qualities are not essential to the nation's rulers; accordingly it puts no veto on the drunkard, the profane swearer, the gospel despiser, or the impure, but admits him to any office to which he aspires as cordially as the man who fears God and keeps his commandments. Thus the explicit law of Christ the King of nations is practically set aside, and the result is as stated by the Psalmist: "The wicked walk on every side when vile men are exalted" (Ps. xii. 8). When we consider that by the passing of the Emancipation Act of 1829 the legislative disabilities of Romanists were removed, and now they can sit, and talk, and vote in Parliament, and have the control in a great measure of all political movements, and having it in their power to upset, or, at least, very much embarrass any existing government, they can powerfully influence the measures of that government, and wring from them almost any boon for which they clamour: a state of things which threatens the very

life of the nation's Protestantism. When we consider that the Jew, who blasphemes the name of the Christian's Saviour, is now permitted to occupy a place in the Legislature, and make laws for a professing christian people; and when we reflect on the injustice that is done to the Church of Christ, and the dishonor that is done to her exalted Head, by committing her government into the hand of a parliament composed of men, many of whom have no sympathy with her in her interests and objects, but who nevertheless have the sole authority to frame her doctrines, appoint her ministers and office-bearers, and make her prayers; thus setting aside the claim of the Mediator to rule exclusively in and over his own house, in accordance with the Father's appointment, who hath set Him King on his holy hill of Zion. I say, when we consider all these things, have we not evidence sufficient to justify us in questioning the right of even Britain to the designation of a *kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The truth is, there are many things radically wrong about the British throne; there are radical evils that must be removed before that she can enjoy the smiles of the Governor amongst the nations. And let me say, in this connexion, that they are the true friends of Britain who have the eyes to see these evils, the hearts to mourn over them, and the moral honesty to faithfully expose them; and the true Christian patriotism, to use all lawful means for their removal, and the establishment of that righteousness which exalteth a nation. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, while the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

And these evils of which we complain, against which we testify, and on account of which we dissent from the national society, *will be removed.* Sometimes we hear the question sneeringly put to those who feel it to be their duty to dissent from the national society, on account of its moral evils—"What can you do to remedy these evils? A few obscure Covenanters, who, if substracted from the population of Britain and its dependencies, would be no more missed, numerically, than one tree from acres of forest." What can you do to remedy evils of such long standing, and to give a more Christian character to British institutions and laws? Well, *we* can do nothing. *We* could no more change the current of public sentiment and public practice in regard to these matters, than we could hurl from their base the everlasting mountains, or drive back the ocean's

wave. But what *we* cannot do, *God can.* What *we cannot do, God will do* in his own time, and in his own way. Yes, the national evils against which we testify, at the expense of popularity, social position, and influence, *will be removed*, for God will take the work into his own hand. By a series of national judgments, he will purge out national evils; in the furnace of national affliction, he will refine Britain as silver is refined; and out of the furnace, he will bring her forth glorious, as she never has been *before;* and that will be when she shall become thoroughly a kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; when she shall exemplify that righteousness which exalteth a nation, and be purged from that sin which is a disgrace to any people.

And what a happy state of things it will be, when not one kingdom merely, but all the kingdoms of this world, shall be thus Christianised. Then there will be *abundant peace.* "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."—(Isaiah ii. 4.)

> "No longer hosts encountering hosts,
> Shall crowds of slain deplore;
> They hang the trumpet in the hall,
> And study war no more."

And then there will be *liberty.* Then Africa's wrongs will be redressed, and slavery, that "sum of all villanies," shall be seen in its naked deformity, and swept away for ever. "God shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

And then there will be *prosperity.* "For brass, I will bring gold, and for iron, I will bring silver, and for wood, brass, and for stones, iron."—(Isaiah lx. 17.) Then shall the earth, that was cursed on account of man's sin, yield her fruit in abundance; "Instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar, shall come up the myrtle tree."—(Isaiah lv. 13.) "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us."—(Ps. lxvii. 6.)

I now propose to notice,

II. Some of the indications which Divine Providence furnishes of the near approach of this glorious condition of things.

1st. We are on the very eve of the predicted period of the downfall of those antichristian systems that have

hitherto been the great obstacles in the way of the kingdom of Christ.

These systems are Mohammedanism and Popery: the antichrist of the east, and the antichrist of the west. These two systems attained their elevation about the same time, and both have been permitted in the mysterious providence of the Almighty to exercise a marvellous influence in the world. In their nature they are essentially the great enemies of Christ and his truth; and in all periods of their history they have proved to be the great obstructives in the way of the coming of His kingdom. The downfall of both these systems, as preparatory to the bursting forth of the church's millennial glory, is subject matter of express Scripture prediction; and as they synchronized in their development, so will they in their end. In regard to Mohammedanism, it is well known that it is fast losing its influence over the minds of its fanatical votaries. It is said that there is a deep impression on the minds of the most thoughtful of that sect, that such changes are rapidly approaching as will materially modify, if not entirely break up, the whole system. Certain it is that the Turkish power —the stronghold of the Mohammedan system—is rapidly declining. A few years ago it was by diplomatists jocularly designated "the sick man;" and the invalid has gained no strength since. It is well known that during the last few years various causes have combined to materially weaken its power, and the population has been so rapidly diminishing as to lead to the assertion that "Turkey is dying out for want of Turks;" and as the system of Mohammedanism is in such intimate alliance with the secular power as to form part and parcel, whatever the fall of the one must necessarily be the fall of the other.

The predicted period of the fall of the Papacy, we have reason to believe is nigh at hand. In the efforts which the "Man of Sin" is at present making to enlarge his power and extend his influence, we have reason to believe, he is only collecting and marshalling his forces for the final struggle, which must eventuate in the shout of victory echoing through every land—"Babylon the Great is fallen." We know that various opinions are entertained in regard to the predicted time of the mystic Babylon's fall. If, however, we fix the time of the commencement of its reign in the year 606, when the Pope of Rome received the title of Universal Bishop (and the most eminent expositors of prophecy favour the adoption of that date), and if we

reckon 1260 years from that time, the predicted duration of the reign of the Man of Sin, we are brought to the year 1866, the time of his overthrow; and the probability is that about that year some wonderful events will occur which will affect the condition of the papacy in all lands, and eventuate in its complete and irrecoverable destruction.

And as that date approaches, do we not see the papacy furnishing symptoms of a rapid decline? What is the Pope's temporal power in the present day? Almost a nonentity. Rome, and little more than a garden besides, is all that now remains to him of his once rich patrimony; and was it not for French bayonets that would soon be lost to him also. What a wonderful change has taken place in the amount of his *political influence!* The time was when the Pope of Rome could utter a voice that was heard by the nations of Europe. He could utter a voice that made monarchs tremble in their capitals. A papal interdict was considered the most dreadful calamity that could befall a land. What a change now! When differences arise between any two powers, who ever thinks of enquiring, on which side is the Pope? When a European Congress was proposed a few months ago, who felt any particular anxiety to know whether the Pope would give his consent? His *spiritual authority* is manifestly on the decline also. It is true, if we look to Britain, we there see the papacy advancing, urging claim after claim, and receiving boon after boon, from a professedly protestant government. And if we look to America we see signs of progress there also. But these, be it observed, are the extremities of the system, so to speak, and the state of matters in these countries does not furnish any infallible criterion by which to determine the condition of the system as a whole. If we want to determine the real condition of the Man of Sin, if we want to determine the state of his health, let us examine his heart —let us look at Italy, France, Austria, and those other old Popish countries which we may properly designate the heart of the system. What do we see there? Symptoms of a rapid decline. Yes—the morning light is breaking; the Bible is spreading, and Rome is losing its influence over the minds of its votaries. And the Pope and his council know this full well, and hence their multitudinous devices to prop up their falling system. What was it that put them some years ago on the scent of the dogma of the immaculate conception but a consciousness of weakness, and a desire to prop up their falling edifice? What is it that has

given such a winking propensity to the images and pictures in some of the Italian [illegible] houses but a consciousness of decline at the heart, and the determination to have recourse to any device that may help to sustain the influence of a system that is fast losing its hold of the minds of men, and that is tottering to its fall? But man cannot keep up what God has determined to bring down. Rome's lying wonders cannot keep alive what God has said He will destroy. Rome's sorceries cannot retard her approaching doom, when the angel shall take up a stone like a great mill-stone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.—(Rev. xviii. 21.)

2d. God has, during the last few years, been effecting some very *remarkable openings for the spread of the Gospel.*

Look at *Russia.* A few years ago, Russia was closed against the Bible in the language in which it could be of any service to the masses of the people. Now, a large edition of the New Testament in the language of the people, has been printed and circulated with the sanction of the Russian government.

Then look at *India.* A few years ago, missionaries of the Cross were not allowed to enter the vast territories of British India. When that devoted missionary, Judson, went there a few years ago, he was not permitted to settle in any place pertaining to the East India Company, but was obliged to seek a home and a sphere of labour in one of the territories pertaining to Denmark. Now, these prohibitory enactments have been, in a great measure, repealed; and though there are still some restrictions on missionary operations, and some countenance given to native idolatry, yet it is very pleasing and encouraging to reflect on the changes favourable to Christianity that have taken place during the last few years; and now that the administration of Her Majesty's Indian empire has been entrusted to such a well known friend of the Bible as Sir John Lawrence, there is ground for sanguine hope, that the word of the Lord shall have freer course than in any past period, and that the standard of the Cross shall wave in holy triumph on the sunny plains of India. Then look at *China.* A few years ago that vast empire, with its teeming population of four hundred millions, was inaccessible to the truth as it is in Jesus. Through the overruling providence of Him who has the hearts of all

men in his hand, and who can make the track of blood-stained armies a passage for the chariots of salvation, China has been opened to the Gospel of peace, and in the very capital of that vast empire, missionaries of the Cross may declare the unsearchable riches of Christ. Then look at *Turkey*. It is not long since it was death for a Mohammedan to embrace and profess Christianity. "Christian dog" was the common designation of the follower of Jesus. How is it now? A depot for the sale of copies of the Christian Scriptures has been established in the very heart of Constantinople, the capital city of the empire, and Christian ministers may preach, and Christian congregations may be established, without any molestation from the higher powers in any portion of the Sultan's dominions. And then look at *Italy*, bright, sunny Italy. In the experience of the people of that land, the Saviour's words have been verified: "The people that sat in darkness have seen a great light; and to them that dwelt in the region and shadow of death, light has sprung up." A few years ago, Italy was the region of darkness and death; but light has begun to gild her mountain tops, and to illuminate her valleys. The word of the Lord has "free course" to a very encouraging extent, and is now being "glorified." The Duke of Tuscany, who imprisoned the Madiai for circulating the word of life, is now an exile from his dominions; and these liberated servants of Christ may now disseminate, without fear, that word which is able to make wise unto salvation. The Theological Seminary recently established at Florence, under the auspices of the Waldensian Church—

> "That Church that kept the truth so pure of old,
> When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones"—

that Church that has suffered more from Rome's fierce anger than any other people, is doing a great work in training of missionaries for Italy, to enter in through the wide door and effectual that has been opened to them of the Lord. The "British and Foreign Bible Society," ever ready to embrace any providential opening for the circulation of the Scriptures, have, by its colporteurs, during the past year, put into the hands of the Italian people upwards of twenty-seven thousand copies of the word of life; and the Scriptures of truth are now publicly exhibited for sale, even in Naples—a few months ago the darkest spot in the dark dominions of the "Man of sin."

These are samples of those wonderful openings which

the Head of the Church has been effecting in his providence for the spread of the truth, and they are bright spots in the moral horizon of the present day. In the way by which these openings have been effected, we have evidence that God can make the wrath of man to praise him; and we are furnished with indications of what He intends to do for our fallen and perishing world, and that speedily. By the translation of the Scriptures into the languages of the nations, and their circulation through the agency of the different Bible Societies, He is laying the pipes for the water of life to flow to all people, and kindreds, and tongues; and when the set time has come, he will open the fountain, and cause living waters to flow into these pipes, and through them, to the thirsting and perishing millions of our fallen race, so that multitudes shall be born at once—whole nations in one day.

3d. The various sections of the Christian Church are manifesting peculiar zeal in conducting and extending their missionary operations.

It is not very long since the missionary spirit of the Church began to develop itself. At the commencement of the present century, a missionary society was almost a thing unknown. What a change has taken place during the last sixty years! What section of the Christian Church is there that has not its missionary societies, its missionary agents, and its missionary reports? To whatever quarter of the world we look, we will find missionaries of the Cross, and glorious results have, in many cases, followed their labours. The Sandwich Islands, in the North Pacific Ocean, furnish a very remarkable example of the success of modern missions. A few years ago, these Islands were the abode of naked savages. The missionary entered. The standard of the Cross was elevated in their sight. The poor savages began to stare, to wonder, to feel, to *believe*, and *live*. One after another bowed at the name of Jesus, laid aside his tomahawk and scalping knife, and began to *pray*. And now the number of disciples has so multiplied, the Islands have become so Christianized, and the Church has been established on such a firm basis, that the American Board of Foreign Missions has recently come to the conclusion that the time has arrived when that society's supervision may properly cease, and henceforward the Christian Church of the Sandwich Islands is to be considered a "self supporting and independent" church.

The island of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean furnishes

another notable example of the success of modern missionary enterprise. About 30 years ago the first missionary entered there. The Gospel began to tell powerfully on the minds and hearts of the natives, constraining them to cast their idols to the moles and to the bats. Soon the fires of persecution began to burn. The persecuting queen of that island determined to suppress the new religion by fire and sword. But that she could not do. Full of faith and of the Holy Ghost the Christian converts triumphed amid their sufferings, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Him who loved them and gave himself for them. That persecuting queen has gone to her account, and another sits on the Malagese throne, who promises full toleration to the new religion, and every facility for its diffusion throughout the island.

And God is signally blessing the labours of his servants in other mission fields. He is sending the rod of his strength out of Zion, and making a willing people in the day of his power. In the days of his flesh, the Redeemer sent his disciples "two and two before his face into every city and place, *whither he himself would come.*" He is doing the same now. He is sending his servants to Greenland's icy mountains, and Afric's sandy plains, to the islands of the Pacific, to India, China, and Japan. And why is He sending his servants? but because it is his purpose to come himself, in his grace and mercy, to our fallen and perishing world. He is coming to claim the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. He is coming to make the wilderness and the solitary places glad, and the desert to rejoice, and blossom like the rose.

4th. The rapid advancement of science and art in the present day, is another remarkable feature of the present times. That "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased," is a divinely predicted precursor of the good time coming; and every one sees that this is a prominent feature of the age we live in. This is pre-eminently an age of intellectual and social improvement. Science is nobly pushing forward its outposts, and art is enriching its treasures with the most wonderful and beneficial inventions. The steamboat, rail car, and electric telegraph, are wonders that our fathers never dreamt of. In what light are we to contemplate these discoveries in science and inventions in art, which distinguish the present age? The statesman will look at them in one light, the merchant in another,

and the man of science in another light still. But there is a Christian aspect in which we are specially to contemplate them, viz., as having an important bearing on the evangelization of the world, as divinely appointed facilities for the speedier diffusion of Scriptural light and knowledge throughout the earth. We contemplate the philosopher in his study, and the artist in his laboratory. They are both seeking to promote their own interests by their discoveries and inventions; they are both seeking to earn for themselves a higher niche in the temple of fame, or to make a fortune. But the Head of the Church, who has the understandings as well as the hearts of all men in his hand, is employing them for another purpose, though they may not know it. He is employing them to bridge the oceans, to tunnel the mountains, to elevate the valleys, to make the crooked places straight, and the rough places smooth, so that a highway may be prepared for the chariots of salvation to roll on more swiftly to the ends of the earth, that all people may be blessed in Him, and that all nations may call Him blessed.

III. Our duty in relation to this glorious era that is rapidly approaching.

1st. It is our duty to *expect it.* And why should we not expect it? Has not God in all ages past been up to his word? Did He intimate to the father of the faithful that his seed should suffer affliction in Egypt four hundred years, and that afterwards they should be emancipated; and was He not up to his word? For we read, that *the selfsame day* on which the predicted period of their sojourning terminated "the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." And has the same God of truth promised a bright day of glory to the Church when she shall come out from the wilderness, and wear her beautiful garments? Has He promised a glorious time when the nations of the world shall be Christianized, and become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ? Why then should we not expect it? "He is not man, that he should lie; He is not the Son of man, that he should repent."

2d. It is our duty *to rejoice* in it. Do we mourn the low state of vital, practical godliness in the Church? Let us rejoice that there is a time coming, when the Spirit shall be poured down abundantly from on high, transforming the moral wilderness into a fruitful field. Do we mourn over the divisions that distract the Church? Let us rejoice that there will be a time when Ephraim shall not envy

Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim; when the Lord shall be one, and his name one, throughout all the earth. Do we mourn the desolations that are made in the world by revolution and war? Let us rejoice that there is a time approaching, when wars shall cease to the ends of the earth, and when there shall be abundance of peace so long as the moon endures. Do we mourn over the dishonour that is done to God, his authority, and his law, by wicked men going on in sin, and refusing to keep his law? Let us rejoice that there is a time coming, when the wickedness of the wicked shall, in a great measure, come to an end, and iniquity as ashamed, shall hide its head. Do we mourn over the dishonour that is shown to the Prince of the kings of the earth, by the refusal of national associations to submit to his sceptre? Let us rejoice that there is a glorious era approaching, when the Redeemer shall take to himself his great power and reign; when the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts; yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him.

In particular, as Reformed Presbyterians, charged with the duty of holding fast, and holding forth the great principles of our fathers' testimony—principles for which they contended, suffered, and died—it becomes us to rejoice in the assured prospect of the ultimate triumph of these principles, and their adoption, as the basis of all ecclesiastical and political associations. With such a hope, let us take encouragement to labour on, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."